

Was it God's will that Paul go to Jerusalem and Rome?

YES!!

Acts 19:21

by

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- I. **Acts 19:21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.**

I believe this verse shows that Paul was being led by the Spirit of God. Some would say that the spirit spoken of here is not the Holy Spirit, but the spirit of Paul. This might be said because the word spirit is not capitalized. Notice the following places where the word spirit is not capitalized, but the Holy Spirit is plainly meant.

1. **Matt. 4:1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.**

(Compare to)

Matt. 12:18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles.

2. **1 Cor. 14:15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.**

(compare to)

Rom. 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

These are only a few of the places in the Bible where the Holy Spirit is not capitalized. Remember that only in the English language is this system of capitalization found. Normally, the Greek language does not capitalize the word "spirit" at all.

Compare Acts 19:21 and Acts 16:6-8.

Acts 19:21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

Acts 16:6-8 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, {7} After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. {8} And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

Here Paul is showing a capacity for understanding the desire of the Holy Spirit, which many do not have. Many say Paul ought not to have gone to Jerusalem, or that he *should* have gone into Asia. They are clearly dealing with things they don't understand, II Peter 2:10-12. Paul's desire is to yield to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit has shown him he will encounter much trouble on this travel. Paul yields himself to this. I believe the reason Paul determined to go to Rome is because he is yielding himself to the Holy Spirit.

II. Acts 20:22-24 **And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: {23} Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. {24} But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.**

Paul is here *bound in the spirit*. This is a good condition. I pray we may be more bound in the spirit of God than bound in *our* spirit.

Notice, the Holy Spirit was telling *others* to tell Paul that he would undergo tribulation at Jerusalem. Why didn't the Holy Spirit tell Paul? Was it because Paul wouldn't hear? I believe the Holy Spirit has already spoken to Paul of the hardships he was to face. Paul had accepted this outcome and was ready to be offered for the cause of Christ. *Other people needed to understand what was going to happen*. In verse 24, Paul states his conviction that he is doing the will of the Lord. His desire is to finish the ministry given to him by the Lord. Paul believes he is in the will of the Lord. ***Who am I to doubt Paul?***

Sometimes God gives us some things to do and also tells us that tribulation will go with it. He did this to us when He saved our souls from hell. He desires for us to live for Him, yet this living for Him is filled with tribulation. This is right and good and just exactly what God expects. We should expect no less.

Sometimes God gives me messages to preach which will not be received by God's people. Sometimes people *actively* reject God's message. Sometimes I know beforehand that the message will not be received. Should I go ahead and preach that message or forget about it? I should preach it, shouldn't I? This is what Jeremiah had to do continually. We are no better.

Acts 20:36-38 **And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. {37} And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, {38} Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.**

These people were full of sorrow because they realize they will see Paul no more. They sorrow greatly when they realize Paul is leaving for good. They sorrow because Paul has been faithful to God in teaching them the truth and loving them. But there is also a lesson these people are learning, a lesson we also must learn. Paul is not their hope. God is. They need to learn to look up and see that God is taking care of Paul. They need to learn to find happiness in circumstances that go against their will, because they know that God is still in control.

Rom. 15:32 **That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.**

Paul, in writing to the Romans from Corinth, tells of his journey into Jerusalem and then how, by the will of the Lord, he will be taken to Rome. This shows us that Paul knew what he was getting into *before* he ever left Corinth. He *knew* he was going to Jerusalem and that he would go on to Rome. He also knew there would be trouble in Jerusalem with the unbelieving Jews, and although he had a troubled spirit because of this knowledge, he was going to ask for the prayers of God's people and go ahead and do the Lord's will. Paul also was not looking forward to the trouble at Jerusalem, but he looked forward to seeing the folks at Rome *after* the trouble was over.

III. Acts 21:8-14 **And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. {9} And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. {10} And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. {11} And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. {12} And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. {13} Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. {14} And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.**

Here is another example of Acts 20:23. The lesson in this place is the same as in chapter 20. This also teaches us that all people are the same. The lessons other people have to learn, we also have to learn.

Please notice *who* is trying to convince Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Do you see the three "we's" and one "they" of verse 12 and 14? Do you see the one "ye" in verse 13? This is men talking with men. Not God talking to anybody. True, God is again warning or telling Paul that there will be trouble in Jerusalem, verse 11.

Look at the grand yielding to the will of God in verse 14. Is this not the place we should each come to? When we can say "the will of the Lord be done." Even when His will goes against our will? Yes, it is good and necessary that people all over (those that know and love Paul) yield themselves to God. It is important to yield ourselves to God, but let us go a step further. Let us *actively* support God's leadership. See verse 15. **And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.** Do you see this solemn assembly, who just a little while before rejected the leadership of God and desired that Paul also reject His leadership? Now these people have reconciled themselves to God and are *actively* helping Paul accomplish those things he is led of the Lord to do. Instead of hindering, or doing nothing, they are now *actively* helping. Only the grace of God can cause such a change.

In the remainder of chapter 21, all of chapter 22 and the first part of chapter 23, Paul continues into Jerusalem and indeed there is trouble. He is bound on false charges, but does get

an opportunity to tell of his conversion.

IV. Acts 23:11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

Paul receives a blessing from the Lord, that he would not otherwise receive.

We miss so many blessings because we do not step out by faith to do the will of God. We must "see" first. We desire the blessings of faith without using faith. This is impossible. When we wonder "where are the promises of God?" do we examine our lives to see if we have stepped out by faith?

V. Acts 23:16-25 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. {17} Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him. {18} So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee. {19} Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me? {20} And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly. {21} But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee. {22} So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me. {23} And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; {24} And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor. {25} And he wrote a letter after this manner:

These verses show how God can take care of us when we step out by faith, and leave our care in God's hands. Try not to fear when tribulations surround us and make the way dark. God has already set things up so that we will be taken care of.

VI. Acts 24:27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

Acts 25:11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.

Paul remembered God's will and appealed to Caesar even though it had been over two years from the time the Holy Spirit told him to go to Rome. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we would have such a holy vision of God directing our life that after two years of nothing happening to accomplish that will, we would remember and still work continually toward that end? How

often we fail to have a continuing vision of God's will. Our poor vision may start readily, and continue for a season, but what is needed is for this desire in our hearts to continue in God's will to remain permanently.

Many times our intentions are good, but our "stick-to-it-ness" isn't very good. The only way we can be changed is to get that Godly vision of His will for our lives.

VII. Acts 26:19 **Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:**

Paul says he was not disobedient to that heavenly vision. The heavenly vision is described in verse 16. It is made up of two things.

1. Those things which you have seen.
2. Those things which I will show you.

One of the things God showed Paul was that he would go to Rome. Please see that Paul says he is not disobedient to the heavenly vision. We may think Paul is wrong, but Paul says he is right.

Acts 26:22 **Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:**

Paul says God has helped him until this day. Does God help someone who is out of his will?

Acts 9:16 **For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.**

A part of the heavenly vision given to Ananias included suffering. This suffering on the part of Paul is not chastisement. There is a difference between suffering for the name of Christ and receiving chastisement at the hand of God.

VIII. Notice the blessings received by Paul on the way to Rome.

1. Acts 27:10 **And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.**

- a. In verse 10, Paul told them to wait, not to go at this time, but they decided to go anyway. The circumstances looked right to them, (verse 13). (The south wind blew softly.) This is another example of how circumstances fool us. Paul was giving directions in spite of circumstances. How we need to learn to do this.
- b. Acts 27:21-29 **But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. {22} And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. {23} For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, {24} Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. {25} Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. {26} Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island. {27} But when the fourteenth**

night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; {28} And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms. {29} Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

Paul had received additional word from God concerning the safety of the crew.

- c. **Acts 27:30-32 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, {31} Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. {32} Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.**

The soldiers finally come to the place of believing the things Paul is prophesying and force the sailors to stay on board the ship. Isn't this the way God continually works? If we would just keep on telling God's work, even though it may not be accepted immediately, it will after a little while. Even people that are not religiously inclined will see that we belong to God and that we have God's word. If we would just remember that God does have control and trust Him for what we say, not relying on circumstances or on what people like to hear.

- d. **Acts 27:33-44 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. {34} Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. {35} And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. {36} Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat. {37} And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. {38} And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea. {39} And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship. {40} And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore. {41} And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. {42} And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. {43} But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: {44} And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land. The prophesying of Paul comes true.**
- e. **Acts 28:1-10 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. {2} And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. {3} And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid**

them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. {4} And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. {5} And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. {6} Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god. {7} In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. {8} And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. {9} So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: {10} Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

Landing on the barbarous island, being treated very kindly, the proof of Paul's righteousness by being bitten by the viper, the islanders changing their minds. Notice how many people have thus far changed their minds about God's will and God's man. God is now convincing a barbarous people, all because one man saw God's will and is going to do it regardless of personal hardships. How many blessings we miss!

- f. Acts 28:16 **And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.**

The captain of the guard trusted Paul with his life. If Paul escapes, the captain of the guard will give his life for Paul's. How long will it be before we learn that God will cause people to trust us, *if* we will simply be concerned with doing God's will, and not looking at circumstances? IX. The end result.

- a. Acts 28:21 **And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee.**

Paul's accusers dropped the case. They didn't have a legal leg to stand on anyway. They also had Paul out of the way, so now they could carry on their false worship and leading people astray without Paul bothering them concerning righteousness.

- b. Acts 28:23 **And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.**

People now come to see Paul, and he gets to witness to them. Although all do not believe, they had great reasoning among themselves (verse 29).

- c. Acts 28:30 **And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, {31} Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.**

Paul's everyday physical needs are supplied and he gets to preach to many people. What blessings!!

d. Phil. 1:12-22 **But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; {13} So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; {14} And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. {15} Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: {16} The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: {17} But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. {18} What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. {19} For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, {20} According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. {21} For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. {22} But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.**

Paul said that his being in jail had actually helped the gospel rather than hurt it. Many were preaching that hadn't preached before. Ironic, isn't it? Paul was taken out the way by religious zealots, and his leaving the area encouraged others to preach. So Paul's accusers actually lost ground. Before they had only Paul to contend with, now they have many to contend with. Aren't things better when we follow God's will?

- e. Books Paul wrote while in Rome.
 - 1. Galatians.
 - 2. Ephesians.
 - 3. Philippians.
 - 4. Colossians.
 - 5. II Timothy.
 - 6. Philemon.
 - 7. Hebrews.
- f. There are seven of these books, the Bible number of completeness. Our lives can be complete if only we will follow God's will.
- g. It is very easy to see how God gave Paul the time to write the books of the New Testament that are such an encouragement to saints today. What a blessing Paul's trip to Rome has been to us! What a blessing to all of Christendom!

Conclusion

I. Matt. 7:1-5 **Judge not, that ye be not judged. {2} For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. {3} And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? {4} Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me**

pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? {5} Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Let's be careful how we judge the actions of others. Let us condemn their actions *only* when it is plainly mentioned in the Word of God. There are too many things wrong in our lives for us to condemn the actions of somebody else. Paul's life is given to us for an example to follow.

It is very sad when men of God, who propose to teach others how to live, do not even have enough confidence in the Word of God to believe Paul, when under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said he was doing the will of God. These are truly false teachers, who are not afraid to speak evil of dignities (those precious servants of God who are doing the will of God). They do indeed speak evil of things they know not! II Peter 2:10-12.

II. Paul is an example for us to follow.

1. Supporting the weak - Acts 20:35 **I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.**
2. Follow me, Paul says:
 - a. 1 Cor. 4:16 **Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.**
 - b. 1 Cor. 11:1 **Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.**
3. Use us for an example:
 - a. Phil. 3:17 **Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.**
 - b. Phil. 4:9 **Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.**
4. Follow us, we behaved orderly before you - 2 Th. 3:7 **For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;**
5. Remember what I have preached to you - 2 Tim. 1:13 **Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.**
And I might add, he's a better example than any man I know of.

III. 2 Tim. 3:16,17 **All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: {17} That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.**

The Bible, and the details of the lives of these great men have been given to us for our benefit, not to criticize the things they did. The Pharisees condemned their fathers and Christ condemned them for it. Surely Christ will condemn this generation for doing the same thing.

There are men of God who make mistakes (David, Abraham, so forth) and these are clearly outlined. There is no scripture, however that says that Paul made a mistake or failed to serve God. Let us recognize the facts and take warning, lest we follow in their footprints. Let us not, for the sake of the intelligentsia, try to find some "new thing" to tickle our ears with. There are enough things for us to thrill to in the Word of God without having to read into the scripture things that are not there.

IV. There is *no scripture anywhere* that says that Paul going to Jerusalem and Rome was against the will of God.

1. When men read the Bible today, they see the *result* of Paul going to Jerusalem. He was bound in chains, put in jail and generally suffered the abuse of his body. For some people, anything that causes them suffering is not the will of God. They have forgotten that Jesus said we would suffer if we follow Him!
2. Paul knew he would be bound while in Jerusalem. This didn't move him, because he so wanted his life to count for God that he willingly gave himself a living sacrifice for the gospel's sake. Is this not the way we ought to be?

V. II Tim. 4:6-8 - **For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. {7} I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: {8} Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.**

Does this sound like Paul had any regrets? Does this sound like Paul wishes he hadn't gone to Jerusalem, then to Rome? Does Paul say, "I have followed the will of God in everything, except in the matter of going to Jerusalem, and Rome?" Paul is very satisfied with his life, even though some "scholars" aren't.

Did Paul ever ask God to forgive him for going to Jerusalem and Rome? NO, of course not. He didn't sin, therefore, he had nothing to ask forgiveness for.

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